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1. British Museum. I. Caleca, Antonino. (Series)

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EGYPTIAN ART
Old Kingdom Sculpture: Detail

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Gallery Book I

DEPARTMENT OF EGYPTIAN ART

First Old Kingdom Room

For further information see

Gallery Book II - Old Kingdom Sculpture
and
Gallery Book III - Old Kingdom Chronology

Entering the room from the Rotunda, we come first to a group of portrait sculpture representing three generations of the Royal Family of the Fourth Dynasty. They rank among the highest achievements of the sculptor's art in Egypt, coming from the time when the technical mastery of the hard stones was giving its final impulse to the great creative period of Egyptian Art. These are six in number, as follows:

CHEPHREN (floor pedestal nearest the door on the right). Face from an alabaster figure less than life-size. Chephren was the builder of the Second Pyramid at Giza. Other portraits of this king are the Great Sphinx beside the Valley Temple of his pyramid, and the famous seated diorite statue in the Cairo Museum.

MYCERINUS. Colossal seated alabaster figure (opposite the doorway), found in the Pyramid Tem-

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ple of the Third Pyramid at Giza. Mycerinus was the successor of Chephren and builder of the Third Pyramid.

MYCERINUS. Slate Pair Statue (against the wall to the left). Mycerinus and his queen, Khamerernebty, found in the Valley Temple of the Third Pyramid at Giza. The group was unfinished at the king's death. The face of the king had received its final polishing and painting, the queen's face was not yet painted, and the rest of the figures had still to receive the final processes of smoothing and polishing.

MYCERINUS. Slate Triad (against the wall to the right). This group represents Mycerinus, the Goddess Hathor of the Sycamore Tree, and the Goddess of the Hare Nome, and was also found in the Valley Temple of the Third Pyramid. The facial type of the two goddesses is the same as that of Queen Khamerernebty.

KHUWENRA (second floor pedestal on right). An elder son of Mycerinus. Small seated figure in hard yellow limestone. He died while still a youth and was buried in a tomb cut in the quarry from which the blocks for building his father's pyramid were being taken.

SHEPSESKAF (second floor pedestal on left). Younger son and successor of Mycerinus, and last

king of the Fourth Dynasty. Head in alabaster from the Valley Temple of his father's pyramid. His own burial-place has recently been identified as the so-called Mastabat-el-Faraûn at Sakkara, some ten miles south of the pyramid of Mycerinus.

The other examples of statuary and relief in this room are all of nobles and high officials of the Old Kingdom, and all save one are from the Museum's excavations at Giza. They are:

SESHEM NOFER (first floor pedestal on right). Head in Assuan granite broken from a life-sized statue of a nobleman of the Fourth Dynasty. The head was found thrown down the burial pit of a mastaba tomb. The rest of the statue was not recovered.

NOFER (second object on left wall). Portrait head in white limestone of a nobleman of the Fourth Dynasty. Four similar heads are shown in this room. They were never parts of complete figures, but were made separately for deposit in the burial chambers of the tombs, their purpose apparently having been to serve as substitutes for the head of the real body in case of decay or wanton damage to it. They are undoubtedly very faithful likenesses of the persons represented. Another representation of Nofer appears in the relief to the right.

NOFER (third object on left wall). Limestone block from the right jamb of the doorway leading to the chapel in the mastaba tomb of Nofer. The figure of the nobleman in low relief is seen striding forth from the chapel. In front of him is an inscription giving his name and titles. Note the pronounced aquiline nose, which is also seen in the portrait head of Nofer on the left. Fourth Dynasty.

MYCERINUS (second object on right wall). Alabaster torso. Chest and shoulders from a life-sized statue of King Mycerinus.

MYCERINUS (in middle of room). Alabaster throne; the lower part of a colossal statue of Mycerinus, similar to the one nearer the Rotunda. Of the figure itself only the legs and part of the pleated skirt remain. The special interest of this object centres in the decorations on the throne, which are very fine examples of sunk relief. On the front, at either side of the legs, is a column of hieroglyphs giving the names and titles of the king. The two sides of the throne are nearly identical: beneath two protecting hawks with outspread wings are two names of the king, while between these appear four hieroglyphic signs signifying "Endowed with Life, Stability, and Power." Below is the symbol of the unity of Upper and Lower Egypt -- the hieroglyph for unity, to which are bound the

Lily of Upper Egypt and the Papyrus of Lower Egypt, each tended by a Nile god. On the back of the throne, below the "Horus name" of the king, the symbol of unity appears again.

SENNUWKA (third object on right wall). Part of the west wall of the chapel from the mastaba tomb of Sennuwka, a nobleman of the Fifth Dynasty. The two niches are the places before which food offerings were set by the relatives and priests. The one on the right was for Sennuwka, also named Keky, and that on the left, uninscribed, was for his wife Ity. Over each niche is a representation of Sennuwka and his wife sitting at table. On the wall space between the niches Sennuwka sits alone while servants bring him offerings, and others prepare meat for the table. Above this scene are hieroglyphic inscriptions giving lists of the provisions available for the refreshment of Sennuwka in the next world.

PEN MERUW (fourth object on right wall). Limestone triad of Pen Meruw. This group, together with the one opposite, were found in place in the "serdab," or secret statue chamber, of this nobleman's mastaba tomb at Giza. Like most of the more important personages attached to the Court, Pen Meruw held a number of official positions, and here he is represented once for each of three of them. The figures were originally painted, and

traces of the reddish color of the flesh parts may still be seen, especially on the legs.

PEN MERUW (fourth object on left wall). This limestone group represents Pen Meruw twice repeated, together with his wife and two children, a son and daughter. It was found in place in the secret statue chamber of his mastaba tomb at Giza, together with the group opposite.

SNEDJEH-IB-MEHY (third object on central axis). The wooden statue of one of the members of a family of royal architects and builders of the Sixth Dynasty. The tombs of the family were found in a group near the northwest corner of the Great Pyramid at Giza. The wood has been partially destroyed by white ants, but the face, especially the left profile, is almost perfectly preserved, and makes it possible to appreciate the high quality of this work of art. The eyes were originally inset in copper rims, the whites probably of alabaster and the pupils of obsidian.

PORTRAIT HEAD of a Prince (third pedestal on left). This head in limestone is one of five similar pieces shown in this room, originally from the burial chambers of mastaba tombs at Giza. (See p. 3, NOFER, second object on left wall). Fourth Dynasty.

PORTRAIT HEAD (third pedestal on right). Head

of an unknown person of the Fourth Dynasty, from the burial chamber of a mastaba tomb at Giza. (See p. 3, NOFER, second object on left wall).

PORTRAIT HEAD of a Prince of the Cheops Family (last pedestal on right). Portrait of a Prince of the blood royal of the Fourth Dynasty. The head was found in the burial pit of his mastaba tomb at Giza, together with that of his wife, shown opposite. (See following description, and p. 3, NOFER, second object on left wall).

PORTRAIT HEAD of a Princess (last pedestal on left). Found with the head of her husband (opposite). The type is clearly negro, and it seems probable that we have here an example of a marriage between a prince of the royal house and the daughter of some powerful chieftain of an important negro tribe on the southern confines of Egypt; possibly the earliest example of a political or diplomatic marriage known (see preceding description, and p. 3, NOFER, second object on left wall).

False Door of KHUFUW ANKH (centre of end wall). This piece dates from the Fourth Dynasty and is made from a single block of limestone. It was found in place in the chapel of the mastaba tomb of Khufuw Ankh at Giza, and represents the door through which his "double" went forth from and returned to the tomb at will. Here the priests and

relatives deposited their offerings for the deceased. The inscriptions on either side of the door give the name and titles of Khufuw Ankh, and prayers for his "good burial." The stone was a gift from the king, a mark of special royal favor, for the inscription to the right of the central niche reads, "His Majesty made this for him in order to honor him before His Majesty while he was yet living upon his two feet." Below the inscriptions are depicted the family of Khufuw Ankh. At the left is Khufuw Ankh himself, his name prefixed by the epithet, "he who rejoices the heart of his lord every day." In front of him walks his son Menkauwra-Ankh. Next, to the right, is the figure of his father Ia-Nesuwty. Opposite him, and on the right side of the central niche, is his mother, named Iuw-Puw. Finally, on the extreme right, are three female figures; the largest represents his wife Djefatek, the second his sister Ity, and the smallest his daughter who is called Meret-Itefes.

Offering Niche of the LADY SAT-TETY-YEN (to the right of False Door of Khufuw Ankh). Composed of three slabs of limestone, and originally brightly colored. The central slab shows the "false door" over which the owner sits at table, and surrounded by inscriptions giving her name and titles and funerary prayers. The two projecting side-

pieces are inscribed above with lists of offerings, and below with the usual offering scenes shown on the walls of Old Kingdom tombs. This niche is a good example of the work of the less skilled sculptors (compare with False Door of Khufuw Ankh, on the left, which is the work of a royal sculptor). One might hazard the guess that the Lady Sat-Tety-Yen, "sole favorite of the king," had lost some of the royal favor at the time her tomb was prepared, and could only afford the services of an inferior workman.